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ABSTRACT

Provided are four brief position statements of The Southern Association on Children Under Six concerning quality programs in public schools for children 4 years of age, supporting parents, quality child care, and developmentally appropriate educational experiences for kindergarten. The statement on public school preschool programs briefly describes characteristics of the 4-year-old, indicates aspects of a developmentally appropriate preschool program, provides a rationale for public preschool education, indicates preschool children's basic needs, suggests guidelines for the implementation of quality programs, and delineates the role of public schools in advancing appropriate experiences for 4-year-olds. The statement on parent support discusses what is known about quality family life and quality parenting, ways to help parents be effective, and plans to support parents. The statement on child care explores children's needs (1) to feel that their situation is a safe and comfortable place to be, (2) to be fully employed in activities that are meaningful to them, (3) to live comfortably with other children and adults, (4) to have their physical development supported and be helped to learn health, nutritional, and safety practices, and (5) to feel that there is consistency in their lives and a shared concern for them among parents and caregivers. Discussion of developmental experiences for kindergarten recommends beginning with the needs of children, suggests ways of designing learning environments to meet children's needs, and points out ways of assessing kindergarten children's development. (RH)

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The Southern Association on Children Under Six

Position Statement on Quality Four Year Old Programs In Public Schools

SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION SACUS ON CHILDREN UNDER SIX

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Quality Four Year Old Programs In Public Schools

The number of four year olds enrolled in early childhood development programs has almost doubled in the last ten years (Schweinhart, 1985). Although government funding for Head Start provides for fewer than 25% of the 1.5 million eligible children, the public schools of fourteen states now provide some degree of funding for programs for four year olds. Such action is the result of the recognition of the identified benefits of early education for all segments of the population.

Pressure for additional program availability continues to grow. The demand is based on:

- Increased awareness on the part of parents and policymakers of the long term value of early education
- Parents' needs for child care services (More than 50% of mothers of preschool aged children in work force).
- The desire of non-employed mothers for their children to have access to preschool programs (32% enrollment increase)

Carefully designed programs are excellent resources for fostering the development of four year old children. However, as public school policy makers recognize the need and rapidly increase the provision of pre-kindergartren education, PRIORITY must be given to the establishment of programs for four year olds which:

- Are based on the knowledge of and response to child development research
- Employ only those who are professionally trained to guide the growth and development of young children
- Focus on the specific needs and characteristics of four year olds and their families

It is IMPERATIVE that public school early childhood programs be appropriately and uniquely designed for the young children they will serve. The characteristics and appropriate experiences for such programs are stated as follows:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOUR YEAR OLD

The four year old of today comes from varying family structures and has probably been exposed to at least one year of day care or nursery school program. Family mobility, divorce rates and changing values require that educators have knowledge of the developmental needs of young children and that they direct attention to the nurturing of the whole child in ways that neutralize the pressure and stress of daily living. A strong support base from both home and school is important to the developing self-concept of the four year old.

BECAUSE THE CHILD:

- Needs to develop self-confidence . . .
- Often lacks self-control . . .
- Is self-paced and attention span varies . . .
- Is action centered, plays vigorously and finds it stressful to be still very long . . .
- Learns most effectively through own individual actions in one-to-one relationships with materials, other children, and adults . . .
- Has a lively mind, is curious, questioning and in a rapid brain growth period . . .
- Talks a great deal, brags, tells "tall tales," has a vivid imagination and needs help with the real and the imaginary.
- Likes to be with other children but does not always respect them as he is centered on himself . . .
- Is experiencing many changing moods and emotions . . .
- Is extremely active, tires easily and is developing important health habits . . .
- Needs the understanding, security and consistency of both his home and school environment . . .

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR FOUR'S

A quality program for four year olds is well organized and skillfully planned to provide for the developmental needs of each individual child. Thought processes and concepts development are achieved through natural play experiences. A multitude of three dimensional materials, such as blocks, paints, dress up items, instruments, books and records, are provided for the child's exploration as he is actively "finding out" about the world and his own strengths and weaknesses. The teacher structures the environment, evaluates regularly, and provides appropriate guidance to facilitate learning.

THE CHILD MUST HAVE:

Success experiences that expand belief in one's ability to learn, create and contribute.

Opportunity to develop responsibility for actions through appropriate rules, limits and choices.

Realistic and appropriate "listening" experiences such as story reading, identified guidelines for new activities; opportunity for deep involvement in self chosen activity.

Adequate space, provisions for movement, activity, noise and dialogue.

Individual and spontaneous child choice groups, few whole class and teacher directed activities.

Concrete sensory learning experiences that encourage inquiry, thinking and discovery with provision for learning represented through play, art and language.

Varied language activities that include listening, speaking dramatic play and the creation of stories and rhyme.

Assistance with the development of social skills such as taking turns and working through problems and disagreements.

Activities that extend understanding and ability to cope with feelings of joy, fear, anger and that channel verbal and physical reactions in an acceptable manner.

Nutrition awareness through cooking and science experiences, daily activities for the support of large and small muscle growth, and periods for quiet and less active play.

Parents involved in the learning experiences; communication encouraged through brief visits and frequent conferences; trust and linkage between home and school.

Given the developmental characteristics of the four year old and the needed learning opportunities, the Board of Directors of the Southern Association on Children Under Six proposes the following standards:

ADOPT QUALITY STANDARDS

- The administrator or building principal should have a minimum of nine semester hours of early education courses with a focus on developmental characteristics of young children and appropriate programming.
- The teacher must hoid a valid early childhood certificate; training must have included work with pre-kindergarten children; the training should meet the criteria of the NAEYC guidelines adopted as NCATE Standards for programs in four year institutions.
- The child must be age four by the same date identifying eligibility for entrance in kindergarten.
- The adult-child ratio should be 1-7, not to exceed 1-10; enrollment that exceeds ten requires the assignment of an additional responsible adult with training in early childhood education/child development.
- The session for the child should not be less than one half day.
- The daily schedule must be flexible, include a balance of free-choice and teacher initiated large and small group activities, and reflect the developmental needs of the whole child.
- The early childhood curriculum must be designed specifically for four year olds and must be appropriate for their developmental level and interests.
- The learning environment must be arranged in interest centers that provide for individual and group learning experiences.
- Materials, equipment, and supplies appropriate for a developmental curriculum must be available in sufficient quantities.
- The classroom must be equipped with movable furniture of correct size, have a water supply available and restroom facilities to accommodate four year old children.
- The outside play area must be accessible for flexible use; be properly equipped for climbing; riding and gross motor activities; and designed for the safety of the child including fencing.

- Minimum space requirements should be based on fifty square feet per child inside and one hundred square feet per child outside.
- The program must include a parent component: education, classroom visitation, and regular conferences to support the child's educational experience.
- A process must be established to provide communication among the early childhood programs in the school: four year olds, kindergarten, and primary grades.
- Appropriate developmental evaluation and observations must be conducted periodically to provide information for effective planning for meeting the individual needs of children.

QUALITY PROGRAMS SHOULD AVOID:

- The reassignment of upper elementary teachers who have no specialized training in early childhood education.
- The elimination of play and the opportunity for child selected activities.
- The use of watered down first grade curriculum that includes formal readiness activities, workbooks, and ditto sheets.
- The placement of children in desks or rows of chairs that inhibit an active learning environment.
- The accommodation of young children in facilities such as classroom, playground, cafeteria, and bathrooms that are designed for older children.
- The use of standardized skill tests rather than observations and informal evaluations to assess the needs of the young child.

THE ROLE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ADVANCING APPROPRIATE EXPERIENCES FOR FOUR YEAR OLDS

The public school system has certain characteristics that can be of great advantage in the provision of needed high quality programs for fours. Public school programs can complement existing programs in the private sector as well as those funded for targeted populations. Parents need viable options compatible with the needs of the family group; all programs should insure effective choices.

Four year old programs in public schools can offer an extended support system to the child, the parent and other school age children in the family. They can provide an earlier opportunity to initiate a cooperative and beneficial relationship with the home. Many schools can accommodate a group of young children with existing space; for some, additional resources can be made available. Programs coordinated by state departments of education can set high standards through established regulations, implementation guidelines, curriculum directions, and continual opportunities for the development of staff.

Excellence in the education of four year old children in the public school systems of America is an available opportunity and an obtainable goal; however, the priorities must focus on actual knowledge of the real needs of the young child as stated in this position statement. The achievements of such programs can be measured in the growth and development of more positive, cooperative, productive and successful human beings.

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION: The Southern Association on Children Under Six is a non-profit professional educational organization whose purpose is to work in behalf of young children and their families. One of its major functions is the dissemination of knowledge and understanding of young children and the provision for in-service development opportunities. The organization's thirteen thousand members represent the wide range of people concerned with the education and development of young children in child care, head start, nursery school, and kindergarten. SACUS, through its history, has been supportive of quality early childhood programs.

POSITION PAPER DEVELOPERS: Sandra J. Nicholson, Early Childhood Consultant and Instructor at the University Center of Tulsa; Kathryn Castle, Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Oklahoma State University; Judy F. Doebler, Early Childhood Specialist for the Oklahoma State Department of Education; Shirley Raines, Department Head of Curriculum and Instruction at Northeastern State University.

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The Southern Association on Children Under Six

Position Statement on Supporting Parents

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1986
Supporting Parents

Parents are the key persons in the life of the young child. In recent years parents have experienced many stressful situations in attempting to be effective with their children. A technologically based economy, increased societal expectations regarding the parenting process, less time and fewer resources from which parents can draw upon in their daily lives, and a cultural context that can only be described as "change oriented" have combined to make the job of parenting very challenging. While some changes such as improved medical care and expanded educational opportunities have benefitted families, many other events have influenced the parenting process in a negative manner. The social esteem once given to parents is now absent in most arenas of life. Social priorities, while focusing on the need for healthy families, have shifted toward more individualistic concerns. The time and resources needed to maintain the family economically have taken from the time and emotional sustenance parents need for supporting their children's emotional development. Because of challenges faced by parents, the Board of Directors of the Southern Association on Children Under Six, therefore, has adapted the following position on support for parents.

What We Know About Quality Family Life

Stable, secure, and growing families are indications of a society reaching for excellence. Research on families indicates that their effectiveness is founded upon at least two elements: quality parenting and a human support system that enables family members to carry out their roles. Highly effective families are not isolated from their surroundings. Rather, they are involved in productive work roles, are active in making the community a better place for living, and are the recipients of many interactions with neighbors, church members, teachers, and others who support the family's development,. Productive families:

- have a sense of purpose
- spend time together in meaningful ways
- support each other in achieving individual goals
- have established "rituals" for maintaining communications
- deal with problems in a constructive manner
- develop connections to the community through various involvements
- are sensitive to human dilema and make room for human errors

What We Know About Quality Parenting

Parents are the key to effective families. In spite of the problems and pressures faced, many parents are effective. Our understanding of effective parenting clearly points to parental self image as the basis for having quality parent-child interactions. To build a positive self image, parents need the support of the total community. Parents who have a meaningful personal life and view the parenting process in a positive way usually transfer this attitude to their involvement with children. Effective parents are those who:

- have a rewarding and challenging personal life
- handle parenting situations in a positive manner
- have and use knowledge of how children learn and develop
- enjoy being with children
- plan for meaningful involvement with children on a continuing basis

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- use positive discipline techniques with their children
- approach parenting and family life in a shared manner
- assess the child's experiences in school and in child care situations
- participate in the school and child care center decision making process

Helping Parents Be Effective

The complex situations parents face require that they have a highly supportive context in which to carry out their roles. For example, the fact that one-fifth of the nation's parents have their first child during the teenage years is indicative of a need for more education regarding the challenges of parenthood and skills needed to become a capable parent. Even in cases where parents have the skills they often are impeded by economic poverty, a lack of necessary resources such as quality child care, and by many other stressful family situations. In order for parents to function effectively the following types of community supports are needed:

- The importance of the parenting role must be accepted by all citizens.
- Parenting must be recognized as a shared process that involves everyone in the community.
- Education for parenthood must become a part of the school-community curriculum.
- Respect for various family styles that promote the growth of all family members must become a part of society's understanding of family.
- Quality medical care for all family members must become a priority in every community.
- Communities must work toward developing quality day care facilities and productive school environments that support the total development of children and parents.
- Family support in the form of adequate housing, food, emotional support, and security is essential to the total health of parents and children.

Making Plans to Support Parents

Much can be done at an individual and community level to support parents in their efforts to have quality families. At the outset an "awareness" program that sensitizes people to the need for a community approach to supporting parents is essential. The following are specific planning steps every citizen can take to help parents and children maximize their talents.

- Stimulate city government to provide parents and children with protection from crime and to develop safe and secure places for living.
- Initiate and/or support legislation that fosters the development of quality day care and productive schools.
- Utilize various community action groups to create job training and career opportunities for parents.
- Sponsor programs that seek quality housing, supportive neighborhoods and other life enhancing conditions for parents.

Parents who have access to needed services such as health care, quality day care, and personal growth opportunities have a support basis for being positive family leaders. Children who have "linkages" to strong parents, sensitive neighbors, and caring teachers have increased potential for becoming capable adults. Societies that "care" for parents and children in substantive ways are sure to approach human excellence.

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION: The Southern Association on Children Under Six is a non-profit professional educational organization whose purpose is to work in behalf of young children and their families. One of its particular functions is to provide training for professionals who work with parents. The organization's thirteen thousand members represent the wide range of people concerned with children and families. SACUS has been active in many capacities supportive of children and families: recent conferences have focused on the needs of parents and families, and recent publications have included materials on parenting and family life.

POSITION PAPER DEVELOPERS: Kevin J. Swick is Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of South Carolina in Columbia; JoAnn Nalley is Director of Childhood Services at Arkansas State University; and Susan Hendley is Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at Columbia College in Columbia, South Carolina.

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The Southern Associaton on Children Under Six

Position Statement on Quality Child Care

1986
Quality Child Care

Two significant social changes in the United States over the past three decades have greatly affected American family life and child rearing practices. The movement of the majority of mothers of young children into the work force and the increase in numbers of young children who live in single parent households have made the care of children outside the home an essential part of the child rearing system. Nearly half of the country's infants and toddlers, more than half of its preschool children, and two thirds of its school age children are entrusted daily to some form of supplementary care. It is the responsibility of early childhood professionals, parents, and the general public to ensure that the care these children receive is of high quality.

The early years of a child's life are especially critical to his* total development. Growth is particularly rapid. Complex motor-skills evolve as sensory-neural and muscular systems are coordinated. Intellectual development occurs at a rate unequaled in any other period. Language is acquired and grammatical forms are mastered. Patterns of dealing with feelings and of relating to others are established.

During the early childhood period the child develops attitudes that will likely last a lifetime. He decides whether he can trust others. He learns whether the world is a comfortable, stimulating, responsive place or the discouraging opposite--uncomfortable, boring, belittling, non-supportive and non-caring. He develops his concept of himself. He finds that he is a worthy, valued, able, learning, problem-solving individual; or he comes to perceive himself as worthless, helpless, and inadequate. He learns to communicate his ideas and to use language to influence others; or he fails to develop fluent verbal skills.

Growth in every area of development is the result of the child's interaction with his environment. The *quality* of all aspects of that environment and of his interaction with it significantly affect his development. His relationships with adults and peers, the kind of experiences he has with materials and equipment, the ways in which his thrusts to explore and learn are supported, and the attitudes and values which he learns in his day-to-day living have a cumulative effect on his future.

The kind of supplementary care provided is, therefore, a major influence in a child's development. Child care lasts all day long, five days a week, twelve months a year. It is the environment in which most of the child's waking hours are spent. The quality of that care is of vital consequence.

Although there is a wide variety of caregiving arrangements for children of various age levels, the quality of any form of care for any child is dependent on the caregiver's response to the question, "For whom does care exist?" Care can be of high quality only if the caregiver is able to meet, for a large part of the day, the child's need for experiences which support his development as a human being. Quality child care must supplement and extend provisions made for the child's development in his home—to protect, nurture, and educate him.

The Board of Directors of the Southern Association on Children Under Six takes the position that the child has certain fundamental needs that must be met in care.

The Child Needs to Feel That the Situation Is a Safe and Comfortable Place for Him to Be

High quality care must, therefore,

- Be staffed by adults who have the capacity to enjoy and appreciate the child, accept his child-like characteristics, and have reasonable expectations for his behavior and for his development.
- Provide for and support his gradual separation from his parent.
- Provide for consistent care by the same caretakers.
- Insure that he is greeted on arrival, listened to attentively, and given interesting things to do.
- Establish a relaxed, comfortable order to his day.
- Help him learn to deal with his own strong feelings.

The Child Needs to Learn to Feel Good About Himself

High quality care must, therefore,

- Demonstrate genuine respect for his individuality and cultural background.
- Provide activities which are suitable to his level of understanding but which also stimulate him to move ahead.
- Hold expectations which are reasonable for him.
- Respect him as a competent, adequate person who is in the *process* of learning and growing.
- Encourage his independence while meeting his dependency needs.
- Provide him with opportunities to make choices, solve problems, and achieve what he wants to achieve.
- Let him be involved in the real work of the center or home—setting the table, getting out and putting away equipment and cleaning up.
- Guide his behavior in positive, non-threatening, non-punitive ways.
- Establish necessary limits, define them in the context of his experience, and enforce them consistently.

A Child Needs to be Fully Employed in Activities that are Meaningful to Him—That Support Him in His Full Time Quest to Learn

High quality care must, therefore,

- Support curiosity—cue to the child that it is good to thrust for knowledge.
- Value play as the child's natural mode of learning and support it with materials and guidance that assure growth through play.
- Base curriculum on the knowledge that young children learn through their own first hand experiences with people, places and things; through appropriate help from adults in mediating and interpreting that experience; and through representing knowledge and experience in symbolic play and language.
- Recognize that little learning occurs from direct instruction and that early imposition of formal instruction and paper and pencil activities may be detrimental.
- Provide a rich variety of materials to manipulate and explore: sand, water, blocks, puzzles, construction materials, activities with animals and with growing plants.
- Provide activities such as trips into the community and visitors to the center to extend the child's experience beyond the home and child care facility.
- Provide opportunities to build on and expand knowledge gained concretely in experience; supply language and vocabulary to express concepts and offer books, pictures, poems, and songs that are closely related to his life experiences.
- Encourage his thinking about and expressing knowledge and experiences with the world by supplying equipment and dress up clothes for dramatic play, blocks, wood working, art and other materials for symbolization.
- Foster thinking, learning and language development through frequent and individual conversations with the child.

A Child Needs to Develop Ability to Live Comfortably with Other Children and Adults

High quality care must, therefore,

- Help the child feel that he has a significant place in the group and in the affections of the adults and children.
- Provide support that helps children grow in ability to interact with each other.
- Be staffed by adults who can interpret children's behavior and feelings to each other in ways by which the personal worth and rights of each child are respected.
- Help children find solutions to conflicts and deal with hostility and aggression in positive ways.

A Child Needs to Have His Physical Development Supported and be Helped to Learn Health, Nutritional and Safety Practices.

High quality care must, therefore,

- Provide a physical environment that is

clean, well maintained and free from dangers.

- Supervise children's activities and teach personal safety, nutrition and health practices in the context of daily living.
- Provide nutritious meals and snacks.
- Help the child develop interest in foods and good eating habits by assisting in good preparation where appropriate and by making snacks and mealtime interesting pleasant experiences.
- Provide materials which encourage physical activity and mastery of large and small motor skills.
- Schedule a day's activities so that there is a balance between active and quiet play and provisions for rest.
- Take precautions against the spread of illness from child to child and adult to child.

The Child in Care Needs to Feel that There Is Consistency in His Life and a Shared Concern for Him Among the Important People in His Life—His Parents and His Caregivers.

High quality care must, therefore,

- Be staffed by adults who have respect and concern for parents, who recognize that parents are the most significant influences in the child's life, and who are able to relate to parents in an empathetic way that recognizes feelings and concerns.
- Work to keep parents attached to and involved in their child's life: report what happens at school; know what is occurring in the home; share joy in achievements; and help parents recognize children's needs and appreciate learning that occurs.
- Provide opportunities for regular, ongoing communication between parents and caregivers: talk informally at arrival and departure times; hold scheduled conferences; use telephone calls and written notes.
- Keep records that document progress and facilitate accurate communication.
- Welcome parents to visit and encourage such contributions as they are able to make.

The significant indicators of quality addressed in this statement are relatively intangible and difficult to regulate. However research and practice have demonstrated that programs which provide quality care have three factors in common: small group size; high ratio of adults to children; and caregivers who are trained in early childhood development and education. Each of these factors is essential to the personal day to day interaction that satisfies children's needs.

The Southern Association on Children Under Six has repeatedly taken a position in support of licensing for all child care programs. Though licensing is not in itself assurance of quality, it is the only legal protection for the safety and well-being of children in care and the only chance that a child care facility will be monitored for adherence to even minimum standards. The Association, therefore, believes that providers of high quality programs support regulation, meet licensing requirements for their programs, and work for licensing standards that reflect the best that is known about good programs for children.

The need for child care is a reality in today's world. High quality care can be a positive force in the lives of children and their families. For their future and the future of the society, they must have nothing less.

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About the Association

The Southern Association on Children Under Six is a non-profit educational organization whose purpose is to work on behalf of young children and their families. One of its particular functions is the development and dissemination of knowledge and understanding of young children and their needs.

The thirteen thousand members of SACUS represent the wide range of people involved in the care, education and development of young children. Support for the provision of quality child care for families for whom such services are needed has been a major focus of the organization's efforts throughout its history.

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* For convenience the authors have used the masculine pronoun throughout this paper. It is not intended to convey sexism nor to imply that more boys than girls are in supplementary care.

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The Southern Association
on Children Under Six

Position Statement on
Developmentally Appropriate
Educational Experiences
for Kindergarten

1984

Developmentally Appropriate Educational Experiences in Kindergarten

The Southern Association on Children Under Six is a non-profit educational organization whose purpose is to work in behalf of young children and their families. One of its particular concerns is the development and dissemination of knowledge and understanding of young children.

The organization's eleven thousand members represent the wide range of people concerned with the education and development of young children. SACUS, through its history, has been supportive of its affiliate states to develop public school kindergarten programs and to strive for quality in those programs.

However, recent trends to incorporate developmentally inappropriate teaching strategies such as workbooks, ditto sheets, and formal reading groups as well as academic skill-oriented curriculum content in kindergarten, raise serious concerns. The Executive Board of the Southern Association on Children Under Six, therefore, has adopted the following position on developmentally appropriate educational experiences for kindergarten children.

Begin with the Needs of Children

A major mark of quality kindergarten programs is found in the relationship of learning activities to the children's developmental stages and needs. Quality programs use the child's natural learning abilities and interests to further his development. Thus, play is fundamental to the child's development and learning. In addition to these assumptions the following understandings regarding children's development should serve as guides to developing effective kindergarten programs.

- Kindergarten children constantly strive to understand and make sense of their experiences.
- Kindergarten children develop understandings through play and other natural learning strategies.
- The social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of kindergarten children are interrelated.
- While kindergarten children follow similar developmental sequences, they do so in unique ways and at different rates.
- Kindergarten children need adults to help them make sense of their experiences.
- The best learning environment for kindergarten children is one in which they can actively participate by manipulating objects and by expressing their ideas through many curricular areas such as music, art, sociodrama, puppetry, and science projects.
- Kindergarten children learn best when all of their development/learning needs and interests are nurtured through a broad and understandable curriculum and guided by a caring teacher certified in Early Childhood Education.
- The different learning styles, interests, and developmental needs of kindergarten children can best be facilitated through informal, flexible classroom arrangements which utilize interest centers and individualized activities and games.
- Kindergarten children learn best when the curriculum is based on concrete experiences to which they can relate in meaningful ways.

Designing Learning Environments to Meet Children's Needs

Kindergarten children are normally inquisitive, explorative and creative in their participation in the learning process. Their unique methods of learning should be supported. A rigid curriculum based on abstract, paper and pencil activities is not understood by them and interferes with their learning. The following guidelines are suggested for developing quality learning environments for kindergarten children.

- Select quality Early Childhood teachers who are knowledgeable in child growth and development, committed to children, and capable of designing programs that meet children's developmental needs.
- Design programs that have adult/child ratios which promote quality interaction in the classroom and allow for the development of close home-school relationships.
- Design learning activities that involve children in using all of their senses.
- Create learning situations in which children can use both the real world and their fantasy world to experience the process of solving problems and creating new ideas.
- Capitalize on children's creativeness by providing dramatic play experiences, encouraging participation in artistic and musical expression and in scientific "hands-on" activities.
- Respond to the many facets of children's development by including social, physical, nutritional, intellectual, and emotional "content" in the kindergarten program.
- Provide many varied opportunities for kindergarten children to use language. Avoid narrowly defined reading programs which emphasize de-coding skills and expect the same level of readiness from all children. To meet the diverse needs and levels of children use their experience as a basis for developing many language activities.
- Provide a participatory curriculum for fostering a sense of autonomy in kindergarten children. Encourage children's decision-making and design learning environments in which the child's needs, interests and discoveries are paramount.
- Utilize a variety of instructional approaches such as individualized learning and small group activities.
- Be intentionally personal in interactions with kindergarten children. Spend time listening to them and encourage them to express themselves both individually and in a variety of social situations.

A quality kindergarten includes many facets: the group planning of daily activities; individual discovery time; varied experiences with language stories and books, and other communicative arts; physical activity appropriate to the children's development; exploration activities by active manipulation of the natural scientific environment; opportunities for representing knowledge through social involvement in group living, role playing and other expressive means; program components that support children's health such as nutritious snacks and lunches, quiet time for reflecting on the day's activities; and many other indoor and outdoor learning situations.

Assessment: Helping Children Develop and Learn

Observations and informal assessments appropriate for kindergarten children are essential to understanding the many aspects of their development. Standardized paper and pencil tests are inappropriate for use with kindergarten children. Effective assessment attempts to insure that deficits are recognized, that remediation is designed, and that strengths are maximized. The following are appropriate guidelines for assessment procedures for kindergarten children.

- Assessment should be viewed as an ongoing process of analysis, a method of searching diligently for strengths and weaknesses so that individualized planning is provided for each child's development.
- Assessment techniques should be used in a caring manner that reflects children's sensitivity to unfamiliar situations.
- A variety of assessment techniques (appro-

priate developmental inventories, teacher observations, parent notations, and developmental profiles) should be used in continuous and flexible ways to help teachers plan effective learning situations.

- Assessment of children's development and learning must consider the "real world" in which the children live. It must recognize home life, cultural setting, and learning style orientation.

Toward Quality Environments for Kindergarten Children

It is crucial that schools provide children and families the best possible kindergarten experience. This experience must be based in knowledge that children develop and learn in a variety of ways. It must include responsive situations in classrooms in which children can actively engage in constructing, refining, and expanding knowledge through appropriate educational activities. All children, regardless of culture, handicaps, or other human differences, must have access to kindergarten programs that facilitate, not impede, their development. Teachers, parents, and other citizens must work together for programs that meet children's needs.

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